

The TRAIL.

THE GATE HOUSE STORIES.

BY Wm. DONAHEY



"In a slow tearful voice he read."

"SAY, Jeff," said Morgan Drew, as the two boys were walking home from school one Friday evening. "I was just thinking that the ice ought to be strong enough to hold by tomorrow morning."

"Sure," exclaimed Jeff Blinn. "Let's take a hike over to Peck's pond and see what condition it's in now."

The two boys disposed of their school books and in a few minutes were on their way. Peck's pond lay at the edge of a small woods, a full mile from the boys' home.

"There's a rabbit's track!" cried Jeff, as they made their way across the big field.

"How do you know they're rabbit tracks?" questioned Morgan.

"Well, you see, a rabbit's hind legs are very long and powerful and make these big tracks, and those two little ones are made by the front feet, which are much smaller than the others."

"Gee," exclaimed Morgan, fishing a note book out of his pocket. "I'm going to make a sketch of these tracks," and, dropping on his knees, he began to carefully copy them.

The older boy stood looking over his chum's shoulder in admiration as the artist's nimble fingers quickly reproduced the tracks. Jeff's pride in his friend's literary and artistic talent and Morgan's admiration of the other's knowledge of scouting and woodcraft was the great bond between them.

"Bully, Specs," exclaimed Jeff, as his chum put the finishing touches to the sketch, "that's a dandy drawing."

"O, it's good enough to give me an idea if I ever want to use a rabbit's track in a drawing or a story," remarked the artist.

"Speaking of a story," said Jeff, "it would be just as good as a story to follow up this track. Why, we could almost tell what this

rabbit was thinking about as he hopped along."

"How?" asked Morgan.

"Why, simply by reading the tracks in the snow."

"Let's do it!"

Jeff needed no second invitation, for there was nothing he liked half so much as following a trail.

"Look," he said, stopping after the boys had followed the track for several minutes, "this means something." Several tracks, closely bunched, showed that the rabbit had stopped, as if he was undecided as to which direction to take.

"He must have been startled by some noise," explained Jeff, closely examining the tracks, "and he has stopped here to look around. Yes—see?" he continued, pointing ahead, "the tracks are farther apart now. He's traveling faster than he was before."

The boys followed along for a hundred

yards or more, when Jeff, who was in the lead, suddenly came to a stop.

"Whew!" he whistled, bending over some tracks that were mingled with those of the rabbit. "The plot thickens!"

"What are those new tracks?" asked Morgan, excitedly.

"Dog."

"But why did he stop here and turn around and go back?" demanded Morgan.

"He realized he was going in the wrong direction," answered Jeff.

"But couldn't he see the tracks led the other way?"

"A dog follows a trail by scent, not sight," laughed the older boy.

A few paces beyond the boys came to the spot where the dog had first discovered the rabbit's trail.

"Well," exclaimed Jeff, after he had examined the tracks a bit. "I think I've got it doped out. The distance between the dog's

front and hind tracks shows that he was running at a pretty good clip when he crossed the rabbit's trail. Right here," he continued, pointing to a spot where the dog's tracks were elongated and sunk deeper into the snow, "Mr. Dog scented the rabbit and threw on his brakes. He turned and smelled back along the trail to the place where we first saw his tracks, and as the scent grew weaker the dog knew that he was going in the wrong direction, so he turned and headed the other way."

The trail led toward a fringe of grass near a rail fence, and as the boys walked along they saw that the rabbit's tracks were not very far apart, which meant that he had hopped along in a leisurely way. The dog's tracks, however, were much farther apart, showing that he had made great speed along the trail.

Hurrying along, they soon came to the fence, where Jeff discovered another interesting point. Carefully parting the tall grass, he disclosed a snug little shelter where, owing to the packed appearance of the snow, the rabbit must have remained for some time.

"Mr. Rabbit stayed here till the dog was pretty close to him."

"How do you know that?" asked the astonished Morgan.

"Because the rabbit's tracks going out show that he was in a big hurry," answered the other. "No rabbit would travel as fast as these tracks indicate unless he was forced to. As there are no other tracks around, it shows it must have been the dog that scared him out."

The trail led under a fence and, climbing over, the boys followed the tracks for fully a quarter of a mile, where a man's tracks joined the trail.

"Hello!" exclaimed Jeff, after he had carefully examined these tracks. "A hunter, I suppose. The trail's gettin' warm. Looks like a hunter's track."

The boys now hurried and soon broke into a run, for the excitement of the chase had gripped them as keenly as though the game was actually within their sight. Presently they came to a pile of lumber, where the disarranged boards and the many tracks about showed plainly that the rabbit, being closely pressed, had taken refuge there. Jeff spent some time walking around the heap of boards, examining all the marks and tracks with great care. Following the tracks a short distance from the pile of lumber, he stopped before a spot in the snow and beckoned his chum to follow.

"What is it?" shouted Morgan, running up.

"It's the end of the trail," answered Jeff, pointing to several splashes of red upon the snow.

"Jinks," Morgan exclaimed. "he got him, didn't he?"

"He sure did—and it took two shots to get him, too," said the other boy, producing the two empty shells.

As it was now too late to visit the pond, the

boys made their way toward home, discussing again the points of the chase as they went along.

"Let's go in and see Mr. Binoy," suggested Morgan, as they walked down the railroad track toward the old gateman's little house.

"All right," agreed Jeff, and breaking into a run, the two boys dashed to the door.

"Just in time, boys—the girls are about to make some hot cocoa," cried the gateman, pointing to Lisetta Bancroft and the Gale twins, who had clustered about a box which served the old man for a table.

Morgan at once launched into an elaborate recital of how they had followed the rabbit trail, and as the cocoa was passed around he enthusiastically explained each detail of the chase.

"I believe that must have been the hunter that passed here about an hour and a half ago," said the old gateman, handing his cup to Lisetta to be filled again.

"Say, Mr. Binoy," cried Jeff, "I'll bet that's the fellow that Specs and I followed. Just for fun, I'll describe him, from the tracks and marks he left in the snow, and see how close I come to him."

The gateman nodded assent and Jeff began. "Well, he was a tall man, carried a double barrel twelve gauge shotgun, wore corduroy trousers, rubber boots, and smoked a pipe. He also had a big rangy dog with him."

"Bless my stars," exclaimed the old man, "you're exactly right. Tell us how you did it."

"O, it wasn't a difficult thing to do," laughed Jeff. "You see, his footprints showed that he wore rubber boots, and his tracks were far apart, which explains the fact that he was a tall man. I knew he had corduroy trousers on because where he knelt down to look under the lumber pile the ribbed effect of the corduroy left its impression in the snow."

"How did you know he had a double barreled shotgun?" queried the gateman.

"Found two empty shells," answered Morgan.

"You couldn't tell from that," smiled the old man. "Two shells could be used in a repeating shotgun, and even in a single barreled gun, if the hunter was quick enough."

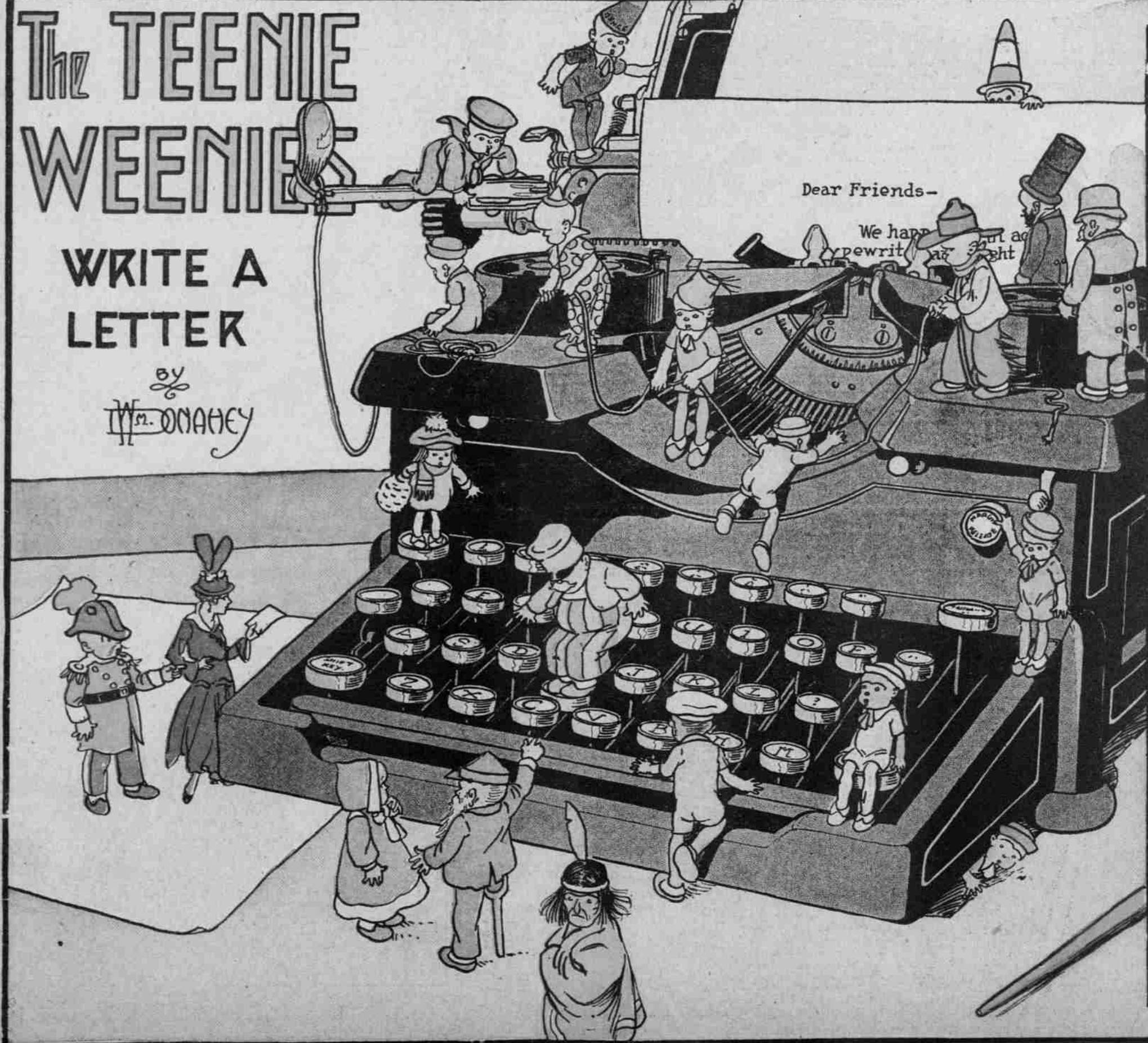
"Well," continued Jeff, "while the man was pulling the lumber pile apart, in order to scare out the rabbit, he laid his gun down on the ground, and the mark in the snow showed that it was two barreled. I knew the dog was big and rangy on account of his tracks, and where the hunter climbed over the fence to the railroad track the marks in the snow showed me that he had knocked the ashes out of his pipe. Some crumbs of fresh tobacco and a half burned match showed that he had refilled and lighted his pipe. As his trail led straight down the railroad track, I knew he must have been smoking as he passed the crossing here."

Another Gate House story will appear next week.

The TEENIE WEENIES

WRITE A LETTER

BY Wm. DONAHEY



Dear Friends—

We happened to run across this typewriter and thought it would be fun to write a letter.

At first we didn't know whether we could write on such a big machine, but after we studied the typewriter for a while we decided that we could do it, and this is the way we went about it.

The Dutchman being the fattest and heaviest was chosen to print the letters.

He finds out, from the Lady of Fashion, which letter is to be printed next and then jumps on the key with all his might.

The Doctor stands up on top of the typewriter and watches to see whether the letters are being printed all right.

We didn't mean to print the t that way, it should have been a big capital T, but the Cook forgot to press down on the shift key which makes the capital letters.

The Duncie just fell off the carriage, where he has been riding, down into the machine and we had an awful time to get him out.

The hardest work is to get the carriage, which is the thing that holds the paper, back. When it gets to the end of a line, the Turk and the Cowboy and the Clown and the Policeman pull it back, ready for the next line, with a rope which is fastened to the carriage handle.

We are all well except the Teenie Weenie Grandpa, who fell over a peanut shell, last night in the dark, and hurt his shin a little.

The Chinaman couldn't come along to day because he had a big washing to do.

Well, we will have to stop for this time, as the Dutchman is so tired he can hardly jump from one key to the other, and the Cook says that he has got to go home and put on a lima bean to cook for supper.

Very truly yours,
The Teenie Weenies.